



Department of Commerce Safety Report

November 2002

Safety Report November 2002

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for November 2002. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in November 2002. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for October 2002, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the November results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Commerce Safety and Health Web Site: The OSH Program Web Site was updated to include additional information and guidance. It includes two new sections on Health and Safety Tips. Health Tips, which are provided by the Washington Adventist Hospital, are updated weekly and address key topics for the month. The month of November included information on preventing and treating diabetes. The Safety Tips section provides information on office and winter safety, but will be further expanded to include information on a variety of other safety issues affecting Commerce employees.

Commerce Safety Poster: The Commerce Safety Poster is complete and copies were sent to bureau Safety Representatives for distribution to Commerce facilities. The poster was developed to highlight the diversity of work activities at Commerce and reflect our commitment to safety and health. The poster includes a statement from Secretary Evans that expresses the importance and value placed on the safety and well-being of all DOC employees.

Federal Safety and Health Council: The Department of Commerce hosted a meeting of the Washington Metropolitan Federal Safety and Health Council on Thursday, November 21, 2002. Key topics included information sharing and participation in safety and health activities affecting the Departments in the Washington Metropolitan area. The meeting included an excellent presentation by Madeline Moxley, Workers' Compensation Program, Federal Bureau of Investigation, on handling controverted or disputed workers' compensation claims.

- ***Safety Program Action Plan:*** The four workgroups established to address key components of the Safety Program Action Plan were successful in addressing a number of programmatic issues in FY02. The participation of the various bureau representatives is greatly appreciated and their involvement was critical to understanding the issues affecting Commerce employees. The workgroups are developing a new Action Plan to address the continuing need for safety training, and inspection, health, and reporting tools and services. The new Action Plan will be available on the web site in December 2002.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

Winter Safety and Health:

With the winter season upon us, there is an increased need to be alert to the hazards this special time of the year brings. Colder temperatures mean snow and ice on roads and sidewalks, and those conditions result in many accidents. The number of accidents and injuries throughout the Department of Commerce increases during the winter months, and many of the accidents are caused by slippery winter conditions. By following established safety guidelines and being prepared, many accidents at work and at home can be prevented. We prepared some basic guidelines that may help you endure the winter weather and prevent an accident.

- Walking on snow or ice is especially treacherous and wearing proper footwear is essential. A pair of well-insulated boots with good rubber treads will help prevent a slip when walking during or after a winter storm. Also, remember to take short steps and walk at a slower pace.
- When crossing the street, be aware that approaching vehicles may not be able to stop.
- When entering buildings, avoid bringing in snow or ice, which will quickly melt and create hazardous walking conditions. Remember to kick the snow and ice off your boots or shoes, and shake your umbrella and outer clothing.
- A proven technique to keep floors dry in inclement weather is to place “walk-off” mats just inside building entrances.
- Signs warning of wet areas should be posted and wet areas should be cleaned up as soon as possible.

More information is available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below is updated using October 2002 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and are calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH} (200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

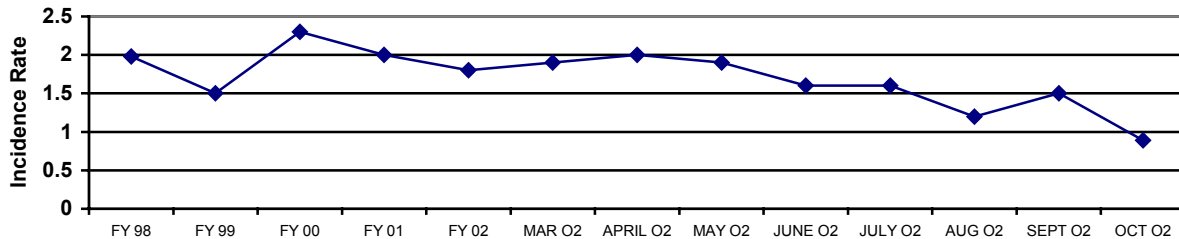
¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours worked per employee per year.

This section provides data on the total and recordable incidents at Commerce. The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, even those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, for comparison to industry trends, it is important to identify those incidents that are recordable under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

For comparative purposes, we have included a table, table 1A, which provides only data on recordable incidents. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

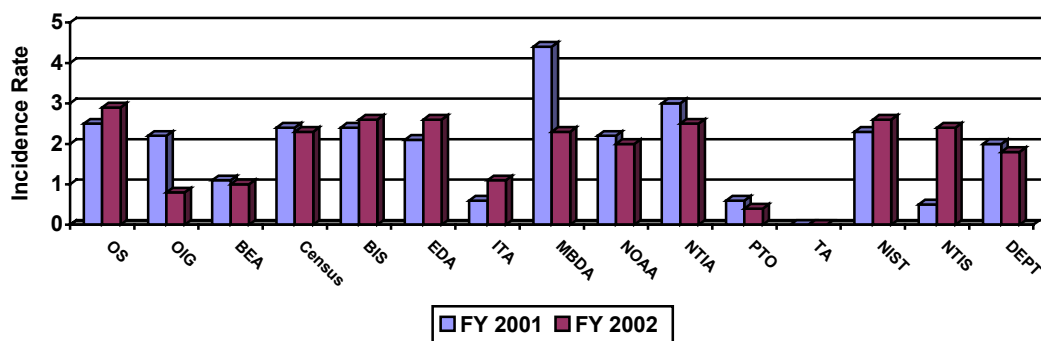
Total Case Incidence Rate Trend



Major Findings include:

- **The FY02 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is down 10 percent from FY01, and down 21 percent from FY00.** The TCIRs are 1.80, 2.0, and 2.3 for FY02, FY01, and FY00, respectively. The Department of Commerce had 642 Workers' Compensation claims in FY02, and 807 in FY01. A decreasing trend was also observed through the year.
- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Office of the Secretary (OS), and the International Trade Administration (ITA) had higher TCIRs for FY02 when compared to FY01 (see table 1 and chart 2).** NIST saw a downward trend for TCIRs from FY98 to FY01. However, their rate for FY02 was 13 percent higher than last year. NIST had ten injuries reported for the month of September and four for the month of October. The TCIR for OS is 16 percent higher than last year. The TCIR for ITA is substantially higher than FY01, but down from previous years.

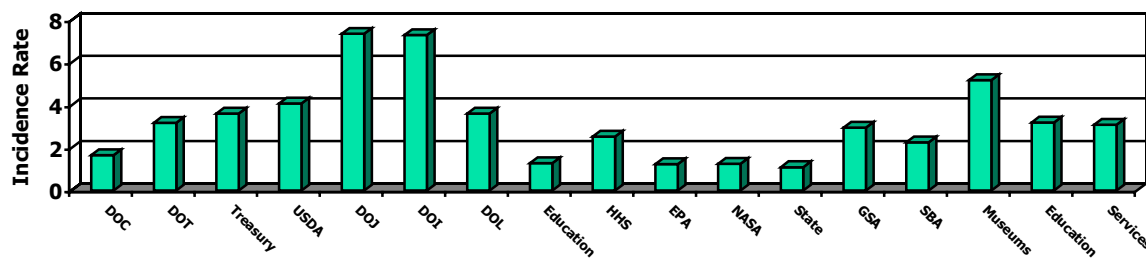
Chart 2



- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), only the National Telecommunication and Information Service (NTIS) is up significantly from last year, when they had only one incident.** NTIS had a total of four reported injuries for FY02.
- **The OSHA recordable incidents or Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TCRIR) for Commerce was down in FY02 to 1.6.** The TCRIRs for Commerce were 1.7 in FY01 and 2.1 in FY00. Chart 3 compares the incidence rate to other Federal agencies and industry for FY01.

Chart 3

Total Recordable Case Incidence Rates for Federal Agencies and Industry for FY01



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A. Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 35 percent of all injuries within the Department from FY00 through December 2001. From October 2001 through September 2002, that percentage remained essentially constant at 34 percent of total injuries. Injuries due to “slips/falls” were 37 percent of total injuries for October 2002. More attention should be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping should have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should also be routed away from walking areas.

- **“Exertion” injuries remain second in frequency for FY02.** “Exertion” injuries are 20 and 30 percent of total injuries for FY02 and the month of October, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects, and avoid hand carrying them. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries are also a concern.** These injuries combined for 19 percent of those reported for FY02, and 11 percent for August 2002. A majority of the injuries for FY02 were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exposures” are on the decline from early FY02.** Two illnesses associated with exposure were reported for the month of October. The percentage of total injuries for exposure is six percent for FY02 and seven percent for October 2002. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 4
Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY 2002

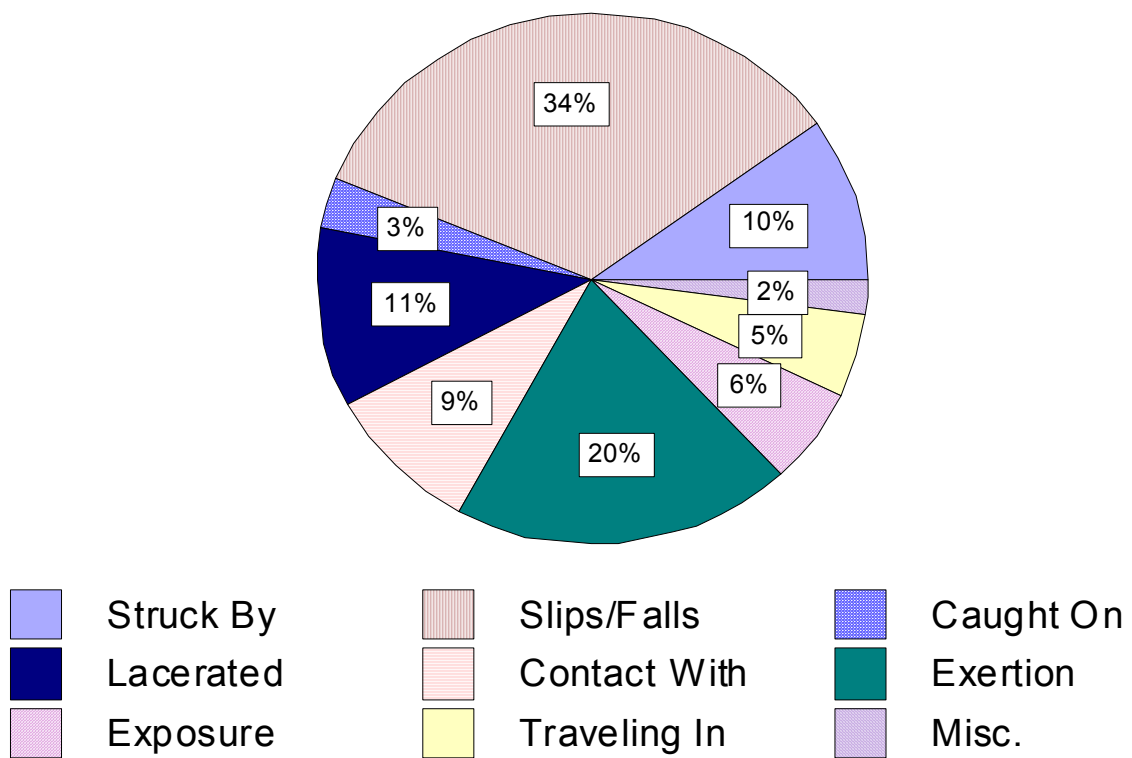
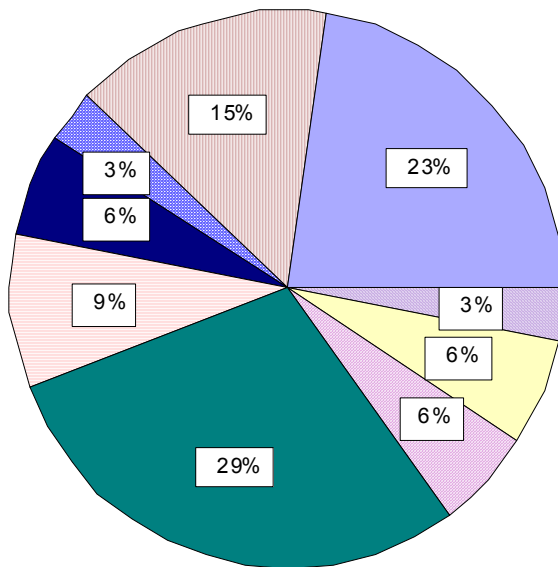


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER

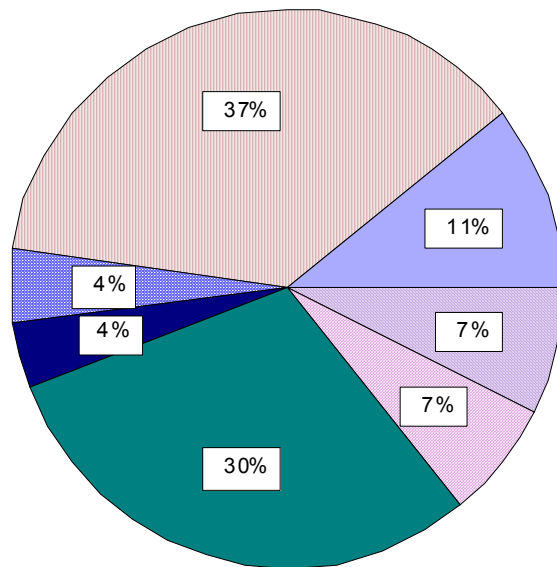


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		September 2002		October 2002		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.4	19	2.2*	35	3.9	22	2.5	23	2.9	2	3.0	2	3.0	2	3.0
Office of Inspector General	2	1.4	2	1.3	4	3.0	3	2.2	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.8	4	0.9	1	0.2	5	1.1	4	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of the Census	282	1.3	311	1.0	383	2.8	393	2.4	241	2.3	19	2.2	9	1.1	9	1.1
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.0	11	3.1	15	4.1	9	2.4	9	2.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Development Administration	4	1.7	9	3.7	4	1.7	5	2.1	6	2.6	1	5.2	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	26	1.3	18	0.9	24	1.2	12	0.6	18	1.1	0	0	1	0.7	1	0.7
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.1	1	1.1	3	3.4	4	4.4	2	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.5	317	2.8	307	2.7	247	2.2	228	2.0	11	1.2	10	1.1	10	1.1
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.2	2	0.9	2	0.9	7	3.0	6	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.7	27	0.5	29	0.5	31	0.6	24	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	30.3	1	30.3
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.6	84	2.9	79	2.8	68	2.3	76	2.6	10	4.1	4	1.6	4	1.6
National Technical Information Service	2	0.7	6	2.6	4	2.1	1	0.5	4	2.4	1	7.1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.9	811	1.5	890	2.3	807	2.0	642	1.8	44	1.5	27	0.9	27	0.9
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		September 2002		October 2002		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	Actual															
Bureau	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.4	19	2.2*	30	3.4	17	1.9	22	2.8	2	3.0	2	3.0	2	3.0
Office of Inspector General	2	1.2	1	0.7	3	2.2	3	2.2	1	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.5	4	0.9	0	0	5	1.1	3	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of the Census	244	1.1	288	1.0	345	2.6	332	2.0	212	2.0	18	2.1	9	1.1	9	1.1
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.4	10	2.8	13	3.5	8	2.2	9	2.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Development Administration	4	1.7	8	3.3	4	1.7	5	2.1	6	2.6	1	5.2	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.2	17	0.9	22	1.1	11	0.6	10	0.6	0	0	1	0.7	1	0.7
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.1	1	1.1	2	2.3	4	4.4	2	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.3	275	2.4	289	2.5	225	2.0	203	1.8	11	1.2	10	1.1	10	1.1
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.2	2	0.9	2	0.9	5	2.2	3	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.7	26	0.5	29	0.5	31	0.6	24	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	30.3	1	30.3
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	3.0	76	2.6	66	2.4	55	1.9	59	2.0	10	4.1	4	1.6	4	1.6
National Technical Information Service	2	0.7	5	2.2	4	2.1	1	0.5	3	1.8	1	7.1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.7	732	1.3	809	2.1	702	1.7	557	1.6	43	1.5	27	0.9	27	0.9
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Reported Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through October 2002)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	26	2	56	22	1	16	2	0	6	4	0	1	1	0	5	2	0	168
Falls/Slips	72	55	3	153	93	3	19	22	2	13	7	0	5	7	1	10	0	1	466
Caught On An Object	4	5	1	9	9	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	34
Cuts/Bites	20	26	0	36	22	1	12	9	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	133
Contact With An Object	13	19	0	24	12	0	1	6	0	6	6	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	93
Exertion/ Motion	64	59	3	54	35	1	7	14	2	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	0	251
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	8	0	7	6	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	6	0	0	12	0	60
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	1	1	8	4	1	1	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	26
TOTAL**	216	209	10	357	219	7	60	64	4	31	24	0	10	18	1	22	20	2	1274

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES (Through October 2002)

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	10
Falls/Slips	2	0	0	2	2	0	4	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	2	0	6	0	0	34
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	6
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	2	1	0	5	4	0	5	5	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	7	6	0	4	2	0	8	9	0	94

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

Section Four: Survey Results

We received only one comment through the Safety Survey Web Site. The comment concerned smoking at the Herbert C. Hoover Building. That issue is being addressed in a revised policy for smoking near building entrances.

We strongly encourage employees to submit comments through the Web Site. To date we have received over 300 suggestions, which have helped us shape a safety program that is responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.